

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of manufacturing an ND filter having at least two kinds of films on a substrate, comprising the steps of:

forming a film of at least one layer having a gradation thickness distribution while rotating a slit mask integrally with the substrate;

forming a film of an outermost layer without using the slit mask on the film of at least one layer having a gradation thickness distribution; and

subjecting the substrate after film formation to heat treatment in an atmosphere pressure and at a temperature of 100°C to 130°C.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein the step of forming the film of the outermost layer is a step of forming a film with a constant film thickness.

4. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 3, wherein the step of forming the film of the outermost layer is a step of forming a film with an optical film thickness $n \times d$ (n : refractive index of film, d : mechanical film thickness) of $\lambda/4$ (λ : wavelength of incident light).

5. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein the step of forming the film of at least one layer having a gradation thickness distribution comprises the sub-steps of:

forming a film of a first layer having a gradation thickness distribution while rotating a first ~~slit~~ mask integrally with the substrate; and

forming a film of a second layer to the layer immediately below the outermost layer having a gradation thickness distribution in an opposite direction from the first layer while rotating a second ~~slit~~ mask shifted from the first ~~slit~~ mask integrally with the substrate.

6. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein the ~~slit~~ mask has a sawtooth shape.

7. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein the ~~slit~~ mask is a mask having a dotted pattern.

8. (Original) A method according to claim 7, wherein the diameter of the dots change stepwise or continuously.

9. (Original) A method according to claim 7, wherein a distance between centers of dots change stepwise or continuously.

10. (Original) A method according to claim 7, wherein the mask having the dotted pattern is used with a distance between the mask and the substrate set to a value in a range of 1 mm to 50 mm.

11. (Canceled)

12. (Currently Amended) An aperture device comprising:
a plurality of aperture blades which are relatively driven to change a size of an aperture;
and
an ND filter fixed to at least one of the aperture blades, wherein said ND filter comprises:
a substrate,
a film of at least one layer which is formed on the substrate and has a gradation thickness distribution, and
a film of an outermost layer which is formed on the film having the gradation thickness distribution.

13. (Previously Presented) A camera comprising:
an optical system; and
an aperture device according to claim 12 which restricts an amount of light passing through the optical system.

14. (Previously Presented) An aperture device according to claim 12, wherein the film thickness of the outermost layer is constant.